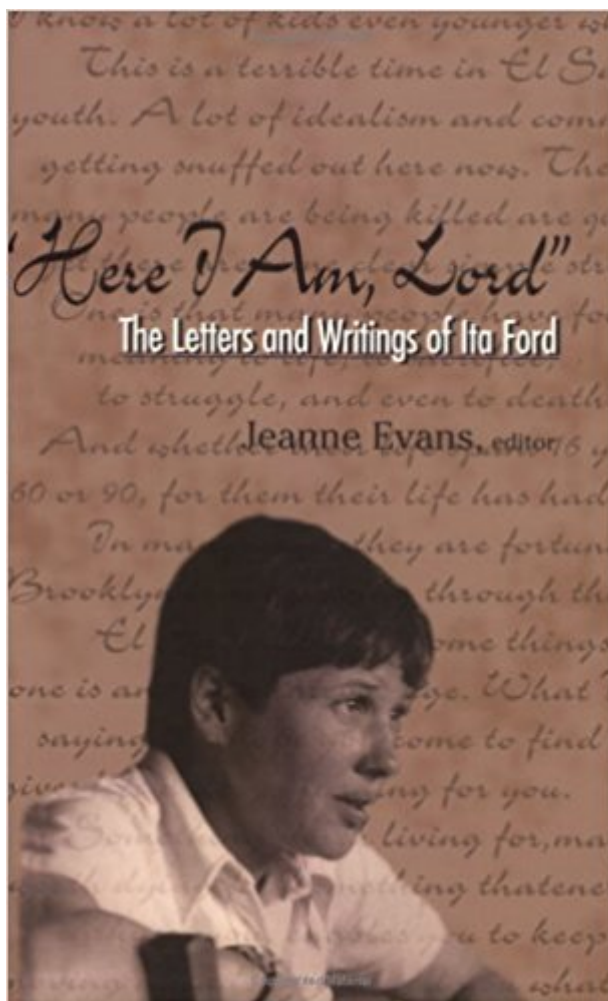


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"Here I Am, Lord": The Letters And Writings Of Ita Ford



Synopsis

The murder of four U.S. churchwomen in El Salvador in 1980, was one of the defining events of its time: an act of brutality, and at the time a singular witness to the power of the Cross. Twenty-five years later, Jeanne Evans has compiled the writings of one of these women, Ita Ford, a Maryknoll Sister and native of New York. Through her journals, letters, and other writings, we follow Ford's spiritual journey from her early life and decision to enter the Maryknoll order, to the experiences in Latin America that altered and deepened her understanding of the gospel. Her writings reflect the qualities that endeared her to friends and those she served.

Book Information

Paperback: 250 pages

Publisher: Orbis Books (October 30, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1570756058

ISBN-13: 978-1570756054

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.6 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 4 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #2,047,420 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #70 in [Books > History > Americas > Central America > El Salvador](#) #874 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Latin America](#) #7726 in [Books > History > World > Women in History](#)

Customer Reviews

"The reasons why so many people are being killed are quite complicated, yet there are some clear, simple strands. One is that many people have found a meaning to live, to sacrifice, struggle, and even die. And whether their life spans sixteen years, sixty, or ninety, for them their life has had a purpose. In many ways, they are fortunate people." --Ita Ford's letter to her niece on her sixteenth birthday, August, 1980

Jeanne Evans is the Coordinator of Religious Studies and the Humanities Major at Marymount Manhattan College, New York.

A wonderful life changing book. This book is incredibly powerful-I recommend it for anyone working with persons in poverty or feeling called to the social gospel

In this book, Ita Ford's personality shines through her letters. She is at once brave, fearful, funny, serious, but always trying to be faithful to a Call to serve the poor of Central America. Her writings are a window into her generous soul and are an inspiration to the rest of us who would prefer to put saints on a pedestal or in a holy picture so that we don't have to emulate them.

Discovering "Here I Am, Lord" The Letters and Writings of Ita Ford came as an unexpected surprise. Not being a dedicated reader of books that could be categorized as theology, the story of Sister Ita Ford's life as told through her letters (which are prefaced by concise but very vivid and helpful Introductions by the editor, Jeanne Evans) impressed me as I became caught up in the simple power of an amazing woman's life work. In retrospect, the relevance of Ita Ford's life story as revealed by Evan's book is compelling to any reader interested in how an individual can fight to change the political structures that control everyday people for the enrichment of the powerful few. The most important actions Ita Ford took on in her life led to her execution-style murder by the Salvadoran military on December 2, 1980. This act of brutality was covered by TV and print reporters around the world. It seems to me that the importance of Ita Ford's life is mirrored in the recent successes of films like *United 93* and *Oliver Stone's World Trade Center*. These films tell the stories of many people caught up in the horrific events of September 11, 2001. They give direct, moving glimpses of the heroism of everyday people, who are very like Ita Ford in suddenly finding themselves facing unexpected unspeakable evil. Ita Ford's heroic death may be a quarter of a century ago; but, the evil committed by certain individuals who are willing to kill the innocent to promote what they see to be their right: to impose their will upon others, is as common an event today as it was in 1980. The politics change, but the importance of everyday people who will sacrifice themselves to fight fanaticism and greed remains as amazing and important in 1980, or 2001, as it is today. What is special about Ita Ford's life? She was born in Brooklyn, NY to a Roman Catholic family, and had the then typical parochial education, which by 1957, took her to the all women's college of Marymount Manhattan, which was then run by Roman Catholic sisters. The strength of Evan's book is immediately apparent in her ability to give a short, precise summary of each stage of Ita's life, and then flesh it out with Ita's letters and other writings that were never intended to be read by the public, and therefore are candid and revealing. At this time, Ita's commitment to the yearbook, and her adolescent agonizing over certain college courses, as well as her reaction to her professors, will resonate with any reader. As Evans takes us further along in Ford's life, we have an insider's view with her struggles as a Maryknoll Postulant [a nun in

formation], and her first defeat when she fails to become a Maryknoll sister. Evans takes us through the decade of the 1960's, while Ita lived in Greenwich Village and lived out a time of the United States' great transformation from post-war Ozzie and Harriet America, to the America of Vietnam, Feminism, and (for those interested in things theological) Post-Vatican II. The heart and soul of Evan's book follows: Ita Ford's return to the Maryknolls and her acceptance for missionary work in South America in the turbulent 1970's. This is impossible to summarize; the reader has to experience Ita's life as Evans presents it. A snapshot will suffice. Ita began her missionary work in the huge shantytown of La Bandera on the edge of Santiago, Chile. The details of the numbing poverty, and the resilience of the Chileans reduced to living in La Bandera has to be seen through Ita Ford's eyes. Her story may be from twenty-five years ago, but the La Banderas of South and Central America are unchanged today. Finally, Ita is moved to go to her destiny in El Salvador by the call of Archbishop Oscar Romero. It is no accident that she arrives in March 1980, to the news of his assassination by his political enemies. She will be executed with three other women nine months later. I was particularly impressed by Evan's ability to use her own Introductions and Ita Ford's writings to give the reader an amazingly clear picture of a woman who thought of herself as very ordinary, but who was determined to do extraordinary things. In a way, Ita Ford's letters show that she saw herself realistically. But, Evan's book gives the reader a much larger view. People like Ita Ford who can put the needs of other people above their own, in whatever small part of the world they take on, are truly extraordinary people. It is the pervasive poverty and meaningless violence in the world that is truly ordinary. Evan's book is a real and moving journey in the footsteps of an amazing woman. No reader interested in the power of one ordinary person to do the seemingly impossible will be disappointed by "Here I Am, Lord."

If you want to meet a person who is interesting, intelligent, funny, energetic, and spiritual buy this book and meet Ita Ford. She will help you realize what is truly important in life. Plus, she is a great writer. Since some of her friends saved Ita's letters you meet her up close and personal.

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